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Award Number: W81XWH-11-1-0517

TITLE: Investigating clinical benefits of a novel sleep-focused mind-body program on Gulf War Illness (GWI) symptoms: An exploratory randomized controlled trial

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REPORT DATE: July 2013

TYPE OF REPORT: Annual

PREPARED FOR: U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command  
Fort Detrick, Maryland 21702-5012

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT: Approved for Public Release;  
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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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1. REPORT DATE July 2013		2. REPORT TYPE Annual		3. DATES COVERED 1 July 2012 – 30 June 2013	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Investigating clinical benefits of a novel sleep-focused mind-body program on Gulf War Illness (GWI) symptoms: An exploratory randomized controlled trial				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER W81XWH-11-1-0517	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Yoshio Nakamura, Ph.D.  E-Mail: yoshi.nakamura@hsc.utah.edu				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)  University of Utah Salt Lake City, UT 84112-9023				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command Fort Detrick, Maryland 21702-5012				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT  Subjects are being recruited for the proposed study and the study is still ongoing. There is no finding to report from the study as of 30/06/2013.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS mind-body intervention, awareness training, mindfulness, insomnia, sleep disturbance, Gulf War Illness					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT  UU	18. NUMBER OF PAGES  4	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON USAMRMC
a. REPORT U	b. ABSTRACT U	c. THIS PAGE U			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)

## Annual Report

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### Introduction

The purpose of this study is to conduct an exploratory randomized controlled trial designed to evaluate clinical benefits of a novel mind-body intervention program for primary care management of Gulf War Veterans with sleep disturbance and unrelieved GWI symptoms. The main objective of the study is to evaluate and compare the clinical benefit of two sleep-focused therapeutic interventions: Mind-Body Bridging (MBB) and Supportive Education (SED) on sleep and co-morbid Gulf War related symptoms. MBB consists of cognitive and attentional (experiential) techniques for cultivating present-focused, non-judgmental awareness of one's body, emotions, and thoughts. We will recruit 72 Gulf War veterans, who first will undergo a comprehensive screening assessment and then will be assigned to one of the two programs (MBB or SED). Each Veteran will receive a total of 6 hours of treatment, in 2-hour sessions once a week over 3 consecutive weeks. Each Veteran will be evaluated again after treatment has ended. Three months after treatment ends, Veterans will complete follow-up questionnaires. These assessments will help us to evaluate both the efficacy of the intervention programs and any differences in individual treatment response. Additionally, the project will explore underlying mechanisms of action involved in treatment benefits resulting from MBB and SED

by using a biomarker of stress as a proxy indicator of intermediate mechanisms activated by MBB and SED.

## **Body**

Progress reported in this Annual Report (please see below) is consistent with Milestone 2 specified in SOW during Year 2, but we clearly recognize that the project is behind the original schedule. As suggested by the program officer, we will request no-cost extension of the project to complete recruiting the targeted number of Gulf War Veterans (at least 60) for the project. With respect to Milestone 2 specified in SOW, we have continued to recruit Gulf War 1 Veterans who have self-reported sleep disturbance and conduct screening sessions. During Year 2 period, eligible veterans who completed screening were assigned to the intervention groups and they also completed pre- and post-intervention assessments as well as 3-month follow-up assessment. We are continuing our recruiting and screening effort and we will run two groups (one group for MBB and one group for control) in August 2013.

## **Key Research Accomplishments (as of June 30, 2013)**

- 40 Veterans consented to participated in the study
- 29 Veterans completed intervention sessions
- 28 Veterans completed post-intervention evaluation
- 14 Veterans completed 3 month follow-up evaluation

## **Reportable Outcomes.....**

Study enrollment is still currently ongoing and we do not have any result yet to report here.

## **Conclusion**

As we will continue to recruit eligible GW Veterans into the ongoing study during Year 3 period, we are optimistic that we will be able to recruit enough GW Veterans into our study. We anticipate that we will request no-cost extension of the project at least 2 months before the end of the project period (Dec. 31, 2013). Given this, we are currently not in a position to reach any conclusion regarding study aims and hypothesized benefits of the experimental intervention program (MBB) at the end of Year 2.

## **References**

None

## **Appendices**

None

## **Supporting Data**

None